

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today voted against a bill put forward by Republican leaders in the U.S. House that would eliminate the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) created in the aftermath of the 2000 election controversy. The Commission's sole purpose is to provide states with the resources they need to ensure that everyone who is eligible to vote can cast their ballots with the confidence that it will be counted. Republican lawmakers claim that eliminating EAC will save taxpayer dollars, however the bill would simply shift costs to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and local governments as the underlying legal responsibilities of EAC would still exist.

"The Election Assistance Commission was set up in the aftermath of the disastrous 2000 election recount, which allowed George Bush to become president despite the fact that many thousands of votes that could have changed the election's outcome were never counted," said Hinchey. "This independent, bipartisan commission was created with strong bipartisan support in 2002 to restore confidence in our electoral system and to ensure that every vote is counted. Less than a decade later, the Republican Party is trying to undermine that basic expectation we have in our democracy.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), which Hinchey supported. EAC is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration. EAC also accredits testing laboratories and certifies voting systems, as well as audits the use of HAVA funds. Other responsibilities include maintaining the national mail voter registration form developed in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

Hinchey today also voted against a Republican sponsored effort to eliminate the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, which provides matching funds and grants for presidential primary candidates, general election candidates and national party conventions. The program is voluntarily funded by taxpayers through a checkoff on their U.S. income tax returns. It was created in the 1970's to help reduce private influence in public elections achieved through campaign donations. Recent presidential candidates have opted out of the use of public funding because of mandatory campaign spending caps that are a requirement of receiving the funding. Hinchey believes that the program has become outdated, but should be updated and expanded instead of eliminated.

Hinchey has continually backed campaign finance reform bills and is committed to ridding the

election system of undue corporate and special interest influence. Last year, he voted for legislation that would restrict big corporations and foreign - or even hostile - governments from anonymously interfering in U.S. elections. Hinchey is a cosponsor of the Fair Elections Now Act, which would allow candidates to forgo big campaign donations from special interests and run viable campaigns for public office through a combination of small donations and public financing.